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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001748

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/IPA AND S/P (DEATHERAGE); NSC FOR
ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [ECON](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: FARMERS FRET OVER FALL OLIVE HARVEST PERMITS

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Palestinian farmers living along the separation barrier in the northern West Bank have expressed concern over GOI restrictions on permits to cross agricultural gates in the barrier. These restrictions would hamper their efforts to bring in the olive harvest, a significant source of income for Palestinian farmers. They said the permit regime during the recent off-season has been more restrictive than those of previous years, and that they are concerned the GOI will not grant access to laborers and family members needed during the harvest. End summary.

Villagers: Access to Land Restricted;
Permits Increasingly Difficult to Obtain

¶2. (C) Jayyus (pop. 4,000) mayor Mohammed Taher Jaber and village farmers told Poloff September 15 that obtaining permits from the Israeli Civil Administration to access their land, located west of the barrier, has become increasingly difficult. Jaber said the village council's survey of residents determined that only 18% of village residents needing permits to access farm lands had them. (Note: The route of the barrier near Jayyus and Zufim settlement has been the subject of litigation before the Israeli High Court. Mayor Jaber had told Poloff August 27 that the village retained an attorney to contest the most recent GOI plan to reroute the barrier north of Jayyus on the grounds that the plan would return only one of five water wells and one-third of the land belonging to the village. End note.)

¶3. (C) Jayyus residents said the requirements for proving a connection to the land were onerous and resulted in a high percentage of denials, some of which they attributed to discrepancies between Israeli and Jordanian systems for recording personal names. Additionally, they noted that, as land passes between generations through inheritance, plots are sub-divided by the GOI and assigned to each descendant. Jaber said farmers with plots of land smaller than one-half dunum (one-eighth of an acre) are not entitled for permits to work the land under GOI regulations.

¶4. (C/NF) Farmers from Falameya (pop. 800) and Kafr Sur (pop. 1,200) told Poloff September 17 that they rely on the able-bodied and young to do much of the manual labor, but it is harder for younger people to obtain permits. According to Falameya mayor Jamil Abdel Ghani, those over 60 are most likely to receive permits. Villagers said Israeli authorities have encouraged them to apply directly, bypassing the village council and the PA, suggesting that doing so would increase the odds of obtaining a permit. Several farmers said many young farmers who have trouble obtaining permits do not take this option because of concerns that they will be perceived as collaborators.

Specific Obstacles for Seam Zone Villages

15. (C) Awani Ibrahim, mayor of Khirbet Jubarah (pop. 450), a village located in the Seam Zone south of Tulkarem, told Poloff September 17 that most residents can access their olive trees for the upcoming harvest, but he is concerned that the village's location between the Green Line and the separation barrier will make it difficult for a sufficient number of laborers to gain access and help with the harvest. (Note: Access to these trees requires a Seam Zone-specific permit that is only given to Khirbet Jubarah residents and their immediate family members. End Note.) He said that bringing olives to market has been more difficult since the barrier was completed in October 2003, because wholesalers cannot get permits to cross Jubarah checkpoint to purchase directly from the farmers, and farmers must drive their goods to Tulkarem or Nablus.

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